

Message Text

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EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, SA, PK

SUBJ: PRINCE SULTAN SEEMS INCLINED TO DISPOSE OF RSAF' S
AGING AIRCRAFT

1. SUMMARY. DURING MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR MARCH 12, MODA PRINCE SULTAN INDICATED PAKISTAN SEEMED INTERESTED IN ACQUIRING RSAF' S AGING F-86' S AND T-33' S. SEEMS LIKE GOOD IDEA; REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MARCH 12 MEETING WITH PRINCE SULTAN I MENTIONED THAT CHIEF OF TRAINING MISSION GENERAL SMITH AND I WOULD SOON WISH TO BE DISCUSSING WITH HIM DESIRABILITY OF SAUDI AIR FORCE' S CONSIDERING HOW IT MIGHT DISPOSE OF ITS RAPIDLY AGING F-86 AND T-33 AIRCRAFT. WE WERE CONCERNED THAT THESE PLANES WERE CONTINUING TO ABSORB DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF RSAF MANPOWER AND OTHER RESOURCES.

3. SULTAN DECLARED THAT AT ONE TIME IT HAD SEEMED DESIRABLE TO CONSIDER TRANSFER OF PLANES TO YAR. THIS IDEA HAD NOW BEEN ABANDONED, SINCE PLANES WERE TOO OLD

AND MIGHT PROVE MORE OF A BURDEN THAN AN ASSET TO YEMENIS. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, PAKISTANIS HAD INFORMED SAUDI ARABIA THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ACQUIRING F-86' S AND T-33' S SINCE PLANES WOULD FIT IN VERY WELL WITH THEIR EXISTING EQUIPMENT AND DEFENSE PLANS.

4. I MADE NO COMMENT EXCEPT TO REMIND SULTAN THAT USG
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PERMISSION IS, AS HE KNEW, REQUIRED BEFORE TRANSFER OF SUCH WEAPONS TO A THIRD COUNTRY CAN BE UNDERTAKEN.

5. COMMENT: WE CONVINCED THAT SAUDIS ARE WASTING TIME, MONEY AND MANPOWER BY THEIR CONTINUING EFFORT TO KEEP F-86'S AND T-33'S PARTLY OPERATIONAL. SULTAN'S ATTITUDE FAVORABLE IN SENSE HE NOW SEEMS TO RECOGNIZE NEED FOR MOVING AIRCRAFT OUT OF SAUDI INVENTORY.

6. STRICTLY FROM U. S.- SAUDI RELATIONS STANDPOINT, TRANSFERRING PLANES TO PAKISTAN WOULD BE A PLUS. MUCH OF EARLY SAUDI MISGIVINGS REGARDING BHUTTO GOVERNMENT HAVE DISSIPATED. SAUDIS AGAIN, AS THEY HAVE TRADITIONALLY, SEEM DESIROUS NOW DOING THINGS TO HELP PAKS WHO CONTINUE BE LOYAL SUPPORTER OF SUCH FAVORITE SAUDI INSTITUTIONS AS THE ISLAMIC SECRETARIAT AND WHO HAVE STEADILY HELPED SAUDIS MEET THEIR SKILLED MANPOWER NEEDS. AT SAME TIME WE RECOGNIZE THERE MIGHT BE NUMBER OF COMPLICATIONS IN OUR SOUTH ASIAN RELATIONS WHICH SUCH TRANSFER COULD CREATE.

7. IF POSSIBLE WE WOULD LIKE TO BE IN POSITION RAISE THIS MATTER AGAIN WITH SULTAN IN INTERESTES OF GETTING RID OF OVER AGE AIRCRAFT. OR SULTAN MAY WELL RAISE IT AGAIN WITH US. (I HAVE ANOTHER APPOINTMENT WITH HIM MARCH 19.) ACCORDINGLY, DEPT. GUIDANCE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
THACHER

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